SECRET EMPIRE™

MARVEL

#9

NICK SPENCER, LEINIL FRANCIS YU, ROD REIS, JOE BENNETT

I'M SORRY.

KOBIK...

I JUST WANTED EVERYONE TO BE HAPPY. =SNIFF= BUT I MESSED EVERYTHING UP...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND-- SOMEHOW, I ***KNOW*** YOU, BUT-- I DON'T KNOW ***HOW.*** ARE YOU LOST, LIKE ME?

=SNIFF= NO, I KNOW WHERE EVERYTHING IS HERE. THAT'S WHY I'M ***HIDING*** HERE.

HIDING? THEN--THEN CAN YOU TELL ME...

...WHAT ***IS*** THIS PLACE?

THEY WANTED ME TO MAKE EVERYTHING BETTER--

--BUT I JUST MADE EVERYTHING *WORSE.*

REMEMBER.

SECRET EMPIRE

A SENTIENT COSMIC CUBE NAMED KOBIK TURNED STEVE ROGERS, A.K.A. CAPTAIN AMERICA, INTO AN AGENT OF HYDRA--AND HE USED HIS MANTLE AS THE MOST TRUSTED HERO IN THE WORLD TO CLAIM THE UNITED STATES FOR HIS NEW CAUSE.

USING A TINY SHARD OF THE SAME COSMIC CUBE, SAM WILSON WAS ABLE TO LEAD THE ANTI-HYDRA RESISTANCE THROUGH A SERIES OF MAJOR VICTORIES. THE PLANETARY DEFENSE SHIELD IS DOWN, THE DARKFORCE DOME AROUND MANHATTAN IS GONE, THE INHUMANS OF NEW ATTILAN ARE FREE AND THE SUPER HEROES OF THE WORLD ARE FLOODING TO THE UNDERGROUND'S AID.

BUT EVEN AS HIS ENEMIES CLOSE IN, STEVE ROGERS IS CLAIMING VICTORIES OF HIS OWN: HE CAPTURED THE BLACK PANTHER, TAKING WAKANDA OUT OF THE FIGHT, AND FORCED EMMA FROST, THE RULER OF NEW TIAN, TO SURRENDER. NOW, HE HAS ALMOST ENOUGH SHARDS TO REASSEMBLE THE COSMIC CUBE AND REWRITE THE WORLD IN HYDRA'S IMAGE.

WHAT CAPTAIN AMERICA DOESN'T KNOW IS THAT BUCKY BARNES SECRETLY SURVIVED ZEMO'S ATTEMPT TO KILL HIM BEFORE THE HYDRA TAKEOVER...AND THE WINTER SOLDIER HAS A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT HOW TO DEAL WITH HIS BEST FRIEND.

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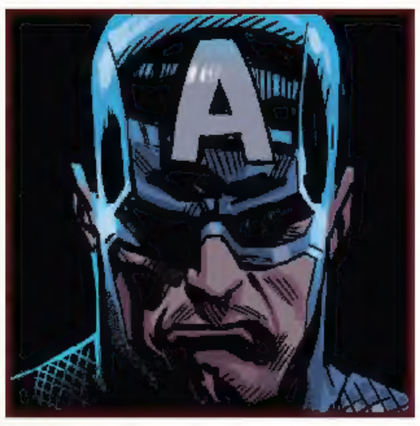
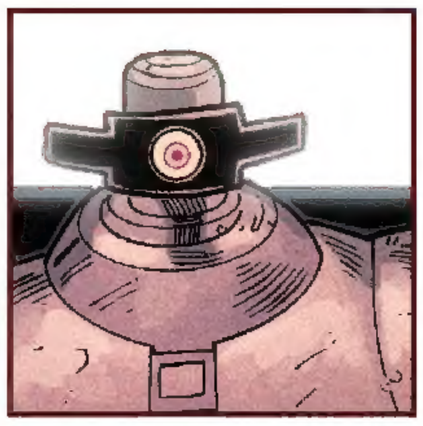
Hydra

Hydra Command



Captain America



Arnim Zola

Baron Zemo

Doctor Faustus

Avengers

Scarlet Witch

Odinson

Vision

Taskmaster

Black Ant

The Underground

Hawkeye

Captain America

Spectrum

Luke Cage

Doctor Strange

Ms. Marvel

Thor

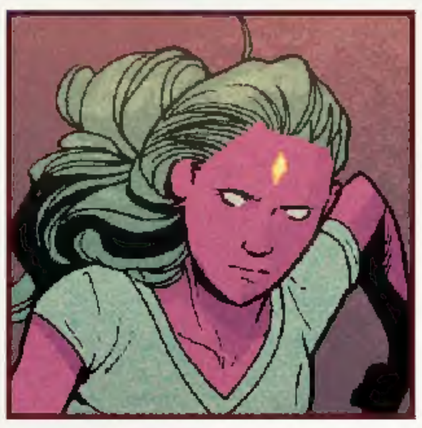
Winter Soldier

Captain Marvel

Captured

Wasp

Hulk



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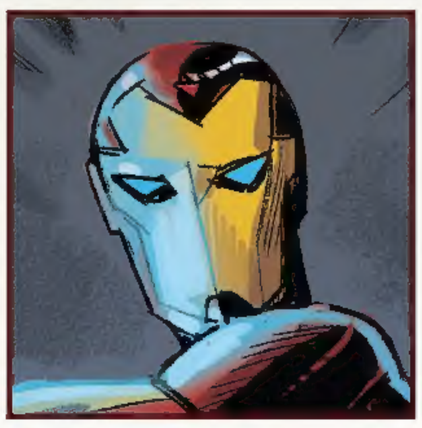
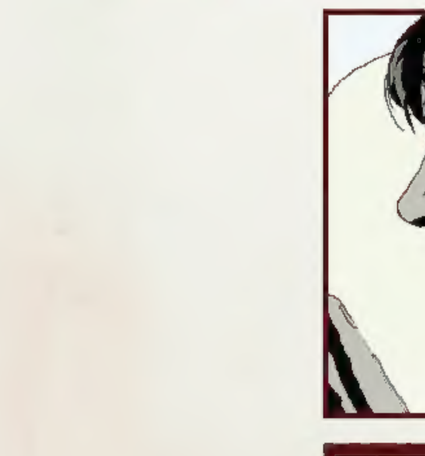


Ironheart



Falcon

Spider-Man

Black Panther

Sharon Carter

New Tian

Emma Frost

Magneto

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SIR? YOU HAVE A VISITOR.

BARON ZEMO HAS JUST ARRIVED.

THERE HE IS--AT LONG LAST--

--THE MAN WHO RULES THE WORLD.

I'VE MISSED YOU, HELMUT.

AND I YOU, STEVEN. ELISA WOULD HAVE BEEN *SO* PROUD.

THANK YOU. AND I UNDERSTAND YOU HAVE NEWS FOR ME.

WHY, YES, IN FACT--I'VE BROUGHT YOU QUITE A TROPHY...

...THE NOW DEPOSED *KING OF WAKANDA.*

T'CHALLA.

"STEVE."

NOW THAT YOU HAVE LOST YOUR COUNTRY, T'CHALLA...NOW THAT YOU ARE OUR *PRISONER...*

...YOU WOULD BE *WISE* TO REFER TO HIM AS THE *HYDRA SUPREME.* YOU HAVE MADE QUITE A SHOW OF YOUR DISREGARD FOR THIS EMPIRE--

--BUT GIVE IT TIME, PANTHER, AND YOU'LL LEARN HOW *EASY* IT IS TO ACCEPT WHAT YOU'VE LOST TO US, WHAT YOU *DESERVED* TO LOSE TO US.

ZEMO...I WANT YOU TO LISTEN TO ME, BECAUSE I AM GIVING YOU MY WORD NOW...

...I AM GOING TO *BREAK* THESE CHAINS.

AND THEN I AM GOING TO BREAK *YOU.*

ZOLA ALREADY HAS HIS CUBE FRAGMENT. I COULD JUST KILL HIM, IF YOU'D LIKE.

NO. WE'LL WANT THE WORLD TO WATCH WHEN IT HAPPENS.

TAKE HIM TO HOLDING.
OH, AND HELMUT?
HHHH
THE ARMY THAT SLEEPS--
--IT'S TIME TO WAKE THEM UP.
SIR--MORE ARRIVALS.
"I'M TOLD THE DELEGATION FROM NEW TIAN HAS JUST BOARDED."
THEY'RE LATE.
Y-YES, SIR, WELL-- THEY HAD SOME TROUBLE IN THE AIRSPACE-- DUE TO THE *FIGHTING.*
AND SPEAKING OF--THE MILITARY COUNCIL IS ADVISING US TO MOVE THE SHIP OUT OF *RANGE*--
NO--
--I'M RIGHT WHERE I *WANT* TO BE.

IT WAS OUR LAST STAND.

THE FINAL BATTLE.

IT WAS THE WAR AGAINST HYDRA.

THE WAR FOR THE FATE OF A NATION...

...AND *HE* LED US.

AIRBORNES! FOCUS ON THE ***DREADNOUGHTS***-- KEEP THEM OCCUPIED, LET THE GROUND TROOPS TAKE CARE OF THE REST!

YOU HEARD ***CAPTAIN AMERICA,*** PEOPLE! LET'S SHOW THESE €@#$!

ALL WELL AND GOOD, BUT EVEN WITH THIS AMOUNT OF FIREPOWER, THEY'VE STILL GOT THE NUMBERS. NOT TO MENTION THAT ***WARSHIP***--

WOULDN'T GET TOO WORRIED, LUKE--A LOT MORE HELP IS COMING OVER THE BORDER--

"--NOW THAT HYPERION AND STARBRAND ARE FREEING IT UP."

HEY, GUYS, WHAT'D I MISS?

BESIDES A FASCIST TAKEOVER OF THE UNITED STATES-- LOTTA DEATH AND DESTRUCTION--GENERAL ***CHAOS...***

KINDA INSENSITIVE QUESTION NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT.

AS THE WALLS FELL, THE HEROES RETURNED.

FROM ALL ACROSS THE GLOBE, THEY ANSWERED THE CALL.

BUT THEY WEREN'T THE *ONLY* ONES WHO ANSWERED.

HYDRA STILL HELD THE ADVANTAGE.

THE WORLD STILL BELONGED TO THEM.

WE HAD A DEAL.

INDEED WE DID, HYDRA SUPREME. AND SOVEREIGNTY WAS OUR END OF IT.

YOU *LIED* TO ME. YOU *STOLE* SOMETHING THAT BELONGS TO HYDRA--

NOTHING ABOUT COSMIC CUBE FRAGMENTS WAS SPECIFIED IN OUR AGREEMENT. IF THEY *HAD* BEEN, PERHAPS WE WOULD'VE ACTED DIFFERENTLY.

DON'T BE COY WITH ME, EMMA. I WON'T SUFFER DISRESPECT--

AND I WON'T APOLOGIZE FOR DOING WHAT I HAD TO DO TO KEEP MY PEOPLE SAFE. BUT... I AM WILLING TO PUT THIS BEHIND US.

I OFFER YOU THE FRAGMENT IN OUR POSSESSION AS A GESTURE OF GOOD FAITH. YOUR LAPDOG ZOLA HAS ALREADY EXAMINED IT--

I CAN CONFIRM IT IS THE GENUINE ARTICLE.

--AND IN EXCHANGE, WE CAN BEGIN TO NEGOTIATE A *CEASE-FIRE*--

NO.

"NO"?

THE TIME FOR "GOOD FAITH" IS PAST, I'M AFRAID.

I CAN NO LONGER ACCEPT YOU AS A NEIGHBOR.

YOU ARE A *THREAT* TO MY PEOPLE AND A CHALLENGE TO OUR STRENGTH. I'M SORRY, EMMA, BUT AS I TOLD MAGNETO IN THE BEGINNING--

--THIS WAS *ALWAYS* TEMPORARY. YOUR ONLY CHOICE NOW IS SURRENDER.

THEN THERE IS NO CHOICE AT ALL. I MADE A PROMISE BACK IN NEW TIAN--

--NO MUTANT WILL KNEEL TO *HYDRA.*

"THANKFULLY

"MAGNETO AGREES."

UNFF!!!

SUPREME LEADER!

HURRY, SIR--THIS WAY--

LIKE HELL. I'M NOT RUNNING FROM A FIGHT--

I WOULD EXPECT NOTHING LESS. BUT PERHAPS THERE ARE *BETTER* WAYS TO FIGHT--

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, ZOLA?

I HAVE--AT TIMES--QUESTIONED YOUR LEADERSHIP. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, OLD HABITS DIE HARD WHEN IT COMES TO THAT *FACE* YOU WEAR.

BUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW, THE WAR YOU BRING--*THAT* I AM EAGER AND WILLING TO SUPPORT IN ANY WAY I AM ABLE. WHICH LEADS ME TO MY POINT.

WITH NEW TIAN'S IN HAND, HYDRA POSSESSES ALL BUT *ONE* OF THE CUBE FRAGMENTS. THAT'S ENOUGH TO WEAPONIZE THEM, PROVIDED THE PROPER CONDUIT CAN BE UTILIZED.

LIKE WHAT?

SOMETHING WE RECOVERED FROM TONY STARK'S LAB--

SOMETHING MOST PROMISING

AND SO THE WAR RAGED ON.

WE FOUGHT WITH EVERYTHING WE HAD.

SO DID THEY.

AGAINST THE FULL MIGHT OF THEIR EMPIRE, WE STRUGGLED. AS FAR AS WE HAD COME--

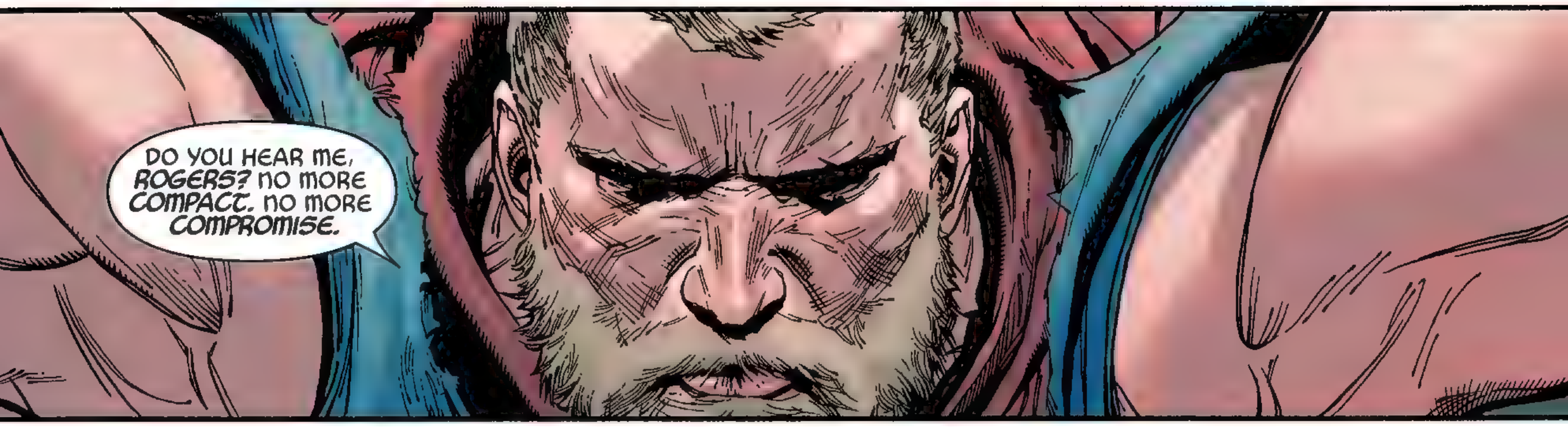
--WE STILL STARED DEFEAT IN THE EYE.

BUT IN THE MIDST OF ALL THIS, A CHOICE WAS BEING MADE.

ONE THAT WOULD TURN THE TIDE OF THE BATTLE.

THE ODINSON HAD SEEN ENOUGH.

NO MORE.


DO YOU HEAR ME, ROGERS? NO MORE COMPACT. NO MORE COMPROMISE.

NO MORE!
BOOM

YOU HEAR THAT BOOM?

YUP.

I KNOW THAT BOOM. THAT'S THE "WE'RE GONNA LOSE" BOOM.

CAN'T SAY I'M ENTIRELY SURPRISED, TASKMASTER. I MEAN, THEY'RE STILL PAYING ***GOVERNMENT WAGES.*** I CAN'T EVEN GET REIMBURSED FOR ***MILEAGE.***

I TRIED TO TELL 'EM, NOBODY GETS IN THIS GAME TO RULE THE WORLD, JUST TO ***SAY*** THEY WANNA RULE THE WORLD. DOIN' IT'S ACTUALLY BORING AS ***HELL.***

QUESTION IS--WHAT DO WE DO NOW? I CAN'T GO ON THE RUN AGAIN. I REALLY LIKE THAT GIRL IN PROCESSING. WE'RE LOOKING AT ***APARTMENTS.***

ERIC, OL' PAL, I BEEN IN THE MERCENARY BUSINESS A LONG TIME. AND WHEN A MERC COMES TO A MOMENT LIKE THIS IN HIS CAREER, THERE'S REALLY ONLY ONE THING HE ***CAN*** DO.

SWITCH SIDES.

ALL RIGHT, LISTEN UP, RUG RATS--

--ME AND THE BLACK ANT ARE WILLING TO MAKE A DEAL.

A DEAL?

YOU KNOW-- LIKE EARLY RELEASE.

YOU'RE GONNA LET US OUT OF THIS NULL-FIELD?

NOT SO FAST, HAIR-GEL HULK--WE GOT CONDITIONS.

YEAH.

FIRST ONE IS, YOU DON'T ***HIT US*** WHEN WE DROP THE FIELD.

AND SECOND IS, WHEN YOU GET OUT THERE, YOU MAKE SURE THE ***AVENGERS*** KNOW WE LET YOU WATCH TV IN HERE.

AND ABOUT THAT TIME WE BROUGHT YOU ***SHAKE SHACK*** AFTER YOU CLEANED YOUR BUNKS.

WE GOT A DEAL?

AND SO WE WERE ALL REUNITED.

I THINK THAT WENT PRETTY WELL.

THWIP THWIP

I HT KDS.

WE FOUGHT FOR THE FUTURE--

--AND THE FUTURE FOUGHT FOR US.

MS. MARVEL!!! YOU ARE HERE!

NADIA! GUYS! *YOU'RE* HERE!

NO TIME FOR HUGS--

--JUST PUNCHING.

FATHER...

01010 01011010 110101

--VIV? IS THAT-- *SKRRT*--

I CAN SEE IT, FATHER--I CAN SEE THE VIRUS-- LET ME HELP YOU...

VIV--NO, GET AWAY--IT'S TOO DANGEROUS-- I CAN'T FIGHT IT FOR LONG--

IT'S OKAY, I CAN DO IT--I CAN'T GET RID OF IT COMPLETELY, BUT I CAN HELP YOU--

--BY SPREADING IT AROUND.

YOUR LIFE IS FORFEIT, LITTLE SORCERER--CHTHON HUNGERS, AND YOU WILL BE SO DELIGHTFUL TO DEVOUR--

CHTHON. *AGAIN.* UNREAL.

WANDA-- IF YOU'RE IN THERE--

SHE IS GONE. THERE IS NO ONE TO HELP YOU.

WELL, MAYBE NOT IN THIS REALM. BUT NOW THAT THE SHIELD IS DOWN--

SUMMON.

UHHN!

DOCTOR STRANGE? WHAT HAS HAPPENED-- WHERE IS MY-- OHHH--

NO--

EASY, DR. FOSTER I'VE GOT YOU.

CAPTAIN!

STRANGE?! IS THAT--

YOU NEED TO GET OUR FRIEND CLEAR OF THE FIGHTING-- SOMEWHERE SAFE BUT CLOSE. IF SHE DOESN'T GET TO HER HAMMER SOON, SHE'LL NEED MEDICAL CARE--

--AND I HAVE SOMEONE ELSE ON THE TABLE AT THE MOMENT.

OKAY, WANDA--I'M GONNA NEED YOUR HELP WITH THIS. AS FAR AS EXORCISMS GO--

"--THIS WILL NOT BE EASY."

I'M GLAD YOU COULD BE HERE FOR THIS, T'CHALLA--

AS AM I, ZEMO. I CAN HEAR THE WAR RAGING AT YOUR DOORSTEP. SOON IT WILL CONSUME THIS SHIP.

ONE CAN ONLY HOPE. WHEN YOUR FRIENDS ARRIVE, LOOK WHO WILL GREET THEM--

--THE ARMY THAT SLEEPS.

AFTER THESE "MASTERS OF EVIL" ATTACKED NEW YORK, WE PROMISED THEM PARADISE.

SO NOW THEY ***DREAM*** OF ONE. STEVEN'S CONCERN WAS THAT LETTING THEM ROAM FREE WAS TOO MUCH OF A ***RISK,*** GIVEN PAST BEHAVIOR.

BUT FAUSTUS HAS BEEN MOST USEFUL IN USING THEIR HIBERNATION TO MAKE THEM CONSIDERABLY MORE COMPLIANT.

GRAVITON...THE WRECKING CREW... THE BLOOD BROTHERS...SO MANY MORE-- PLENTY TO TURN THE TIDE IN THE FIGHTING, ONCE I WAKE THEM. GUARDS--

...?

HEY, ZEMO--

--THIS IS FOR STRAPPING ME TO A ROCKET.

AGAIN.

BUCKY BARNES-- EVER THE *SURVIVOR.*

I COULD ALMOST *ADMIRE* THAT--

--BUT EVERYONE'S LUCK RUNS OUT SOMETIME.

I WONDER...DO YOU EVEN KNOW HOW MUCH YOU'VE LOST? THE THINGS I COULD SHOW YOU.

OR PERHAPS MY DEAR FRIEND STEVEN SHOULD BE THE ONE TO TELL YOU--

YOU TALK TOO MUCH.

GUH!

IT MAKES YOU DISTRACTED. I, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE LEARNED TO STAY FOCUSED ON WHAT'S BEFORE ME.

LOOK AT HIM, ZEMO--LOOK AT YOUR "BEST FRIEND." YOU CANNOT SAVE HIM. AND WHEN YOU WAKE, HE WILL BE *GONE.*

STEVEN...

NO...

THAT'S REASON ENOUGH TO KEEP YOU ALIVE.

I APPRECIATE THE ASSISTANCE, BARNES.

I WAS ABOUT TO SAY THE SAME TO YOU, YOUR MAJESTY--BUT YOU SHOULD GET MOVING...

...I'LL TAKE CARE OF *ZEMO.*

HAIL HYDRA!

WONDERFUL, COMMANDER CARTER. REALLY, JUST WONDERFUL. YOU'VE MADE SO MUCH PROGRESS IN OUR SESSIONS!

THE SUPREME LEADER WAS SO HEARTBROKEN BY YOUR DISLOYALTY-- I WAS HAPPY TO OFFER MY SERVICES IN HELPING YOU BECOME A BIT MORE...*COOPERATIVE.*

NOW BE A DEAR, AND BRING ME MY TEA.

YES, DOCTOR FAUSTUS.

WE HAVE SO MUCH HISTORY, YOU AND I. AND I THOUGHT THAT THE DAY YOU PUT A BULLET IN CAPTAIN AMERICA'S CHEST WAS MY CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT.

BUT I MIGHT JUST OUTDO THAT...BY MAKING YOU *LOVE* HIM AGAIN. WHAT DELIGHTFUL SYMMETRY.

YES, DOCTOR FAUSTUS--

MM. PERFECT. JUST THE WAY I--

HRRK--

DON'T WORRY, THE TOXIN'S NOT LETHAL...

...BUT I AM.

WE *DO* GO BACK A LONG WAY, FAUSTUS. AND I NEVER FORGOT THAT DAY, EITHER.

THAT'S WHY I LISTENED TO RECORDINGS OF YOUR VOICE CONSTANTLY FOR MONTHS AFTERWARD--

--TO BUILD UP AN *IMMUNITY* TO IT.

NOW, AS FOR *YOU,* STEVE--YOU'RE ALWAYS TELLING ME IT'S THE *REAL* YOU--

--WHICH MEANS I STILL KNOW YOUR *PASSWORDS.*

LET'S SEE HOW *STRONG* YOU FEEL WHEN THOSE *WARSHIPS* OF YOURS START *FALLING OUT OF THE SKY.*

AND YOU'RE SURE THIS WILL WORK, ZOLA?

I WOULD STAKE MY LIFE ON IT, SUPREME LEADER. STARK'S TECHNOLOGY IS INDEED IMPRESSIVE, BUT MY MODIFICATIONS WILL ALLOW IT TO DO *SO* MUCH MORE.

WITH THIS, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO WIELD THE COSMIC CUBE AS YOUR *RIGHTFUL WEAPON.*

WITH THIS, YOU WILL HAVE THE POWER OF A *GOD.*

AAAAARRGGHHH!

LET THEM RAGE AND FIGHT ALL THEY LIKE--

--THIS IS HOW THE *TRUE* WAR WILL BE WON.

YOU REMEMBER NOW?

I'M STARTING TO...

"I WAS A SOLDIER--

"--FOR A CAUSE I BELIEVED IN.

"THERE WAS A BATTLE, AND I--

"--I WAS ABOUT TO DIE..."

...THEN I WOKE UP HERE, IN THIS PLACE.

"I THOUGHT I WAS ALONE. LOST. TRYING TO GET HOME.

"BUT THERE WERE OTHERS HERE--

"--PEOPLE I *KNEW*-- PEOPLE WHO REMINDED ME OF MY PAST LIFE.

"PEOPLE I FOUGHT ALONGSIDE--

"--AND PEOPLE I FOUGHT *AGAINST.*

"PEOPLE I *LOVED.*

BUT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT ALL THIS IS.

AM I DEAD? DREAMING? IS THIS ALL IN MY MIND? AND--

--WHAT ABOUT *HOME?*

=SNIFF= GO LOOK

AND SO WE FACED OUR ULTIMATE ENEMY--

--THE EVIL WE HAD BECOME.

IT BROUGHT US LOW--

--AND LEFT US BROKEN.

GHOSTS OF WHAT WE ONCE WERE.

SO THAT'S IT, THEN.

THIS ISN'T IN *MY* MIND--

--IT'S IN *YOURS.*

I'M JUST... THE *MEMORY* OF SOMEONE YOU KNEW. SOMEONE YOU *CHANGED.*

BUT YOU CAN MAKE ME *REAL* AGAIN, CAN'T YOU?

KOBIK--DO YOU UNDERSTAND? YOU CAN BRING ME *BACK.* WE HAVE TO *HELP* THEM--

N-NO-- I CAN'T--HE'S TOO SCARY.

IT'S TOO LATE!!!

KOBIK! WAIT--

KOBIK?!

WE HAD THOUGHT THIS WAS OUR MOMENT.

OUR CHANCE TO CHANGE EVERYTHING.

RUMBLE

AND AFTER SO MUCH AGONY--SO MANY DEFEATS--HERE WE WERE--

--ON THE CUSP OF VICTORY. WE HAD TAKEN THEIR BEST SHOT--

--AND STILL WE STOOD.

IT WAS *THEIR* TURN TO FALL.

OKAY, MAYBE IT'S JUST THE ADRENALINE--AND LORD KNOWS IT'S BEEN A WHILE, SO I MAY NOT RECOGNIZE WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE, BUT--

--THIS IS *FUN*, RIGHT?

YEAH, CAROL--THIS IS FUN.

AND IT *WAS.*

WE WERE FINALLY BACK.

WE FOUGHT *TOGETHER,* FOR WHAT WE *BELIEVED* IN--

--TO PROTECT THOSE WHO COULD NOT PROTECT THEMSELVES.

AT LONG LAST, WE WERE THE HEROES THEY HAD NEEDED US TO BE ALL ALONG--

--BUT THAT DIDN'T MEAN WE WOULD BE *ENOUGH.*

ALL OF YOU-- ALL OF YOU-- LISTEN TO ME--

T'CHALLA? WHAT ARE YOU DOIN' H--

RUN.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE STOOD BEFORE US STILL.

WE HAD BEATEN HIS ARMIES.

DEFEATED HIS ALLIES.

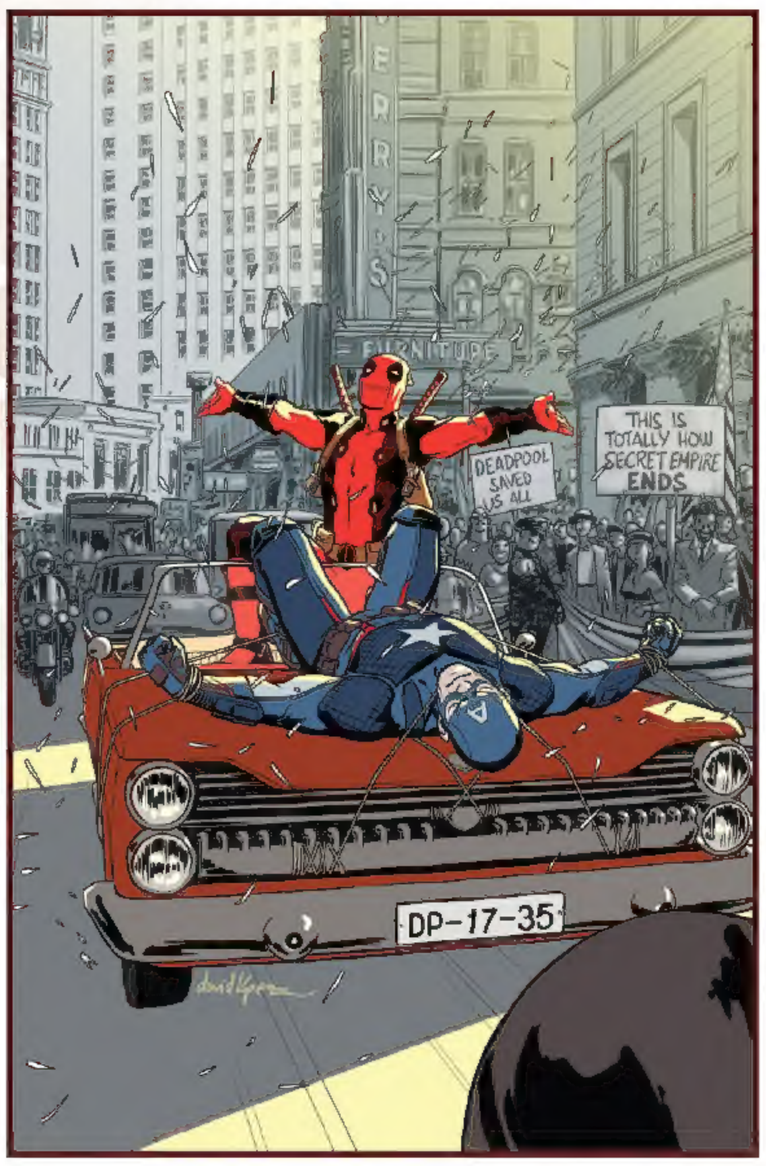
BUT WE HAD NOT DEFEATED *HIM.*

TO BE CONCLUDED!

Secret Empire

August

Deadpool #35



Deadpool sided with Hydra--but that was a bad idea and now he's going to take them down himself! ...Right?

X-Men Blue #9

Jean and Jimmy fight to rescue their teammates from Emma Frost!

Champions #11

Hope springs from the ruins of Las Vegas.

Beyond the Shield | Darkforce New York

The Mighty Captain Marvel #8

Captain Marvel and her new recruits make one last stand against the Chitauri.

Doctor Strange #24

Doctor Strange takes on Mordo, with the fate of New York at stake!

Secret Empire

August

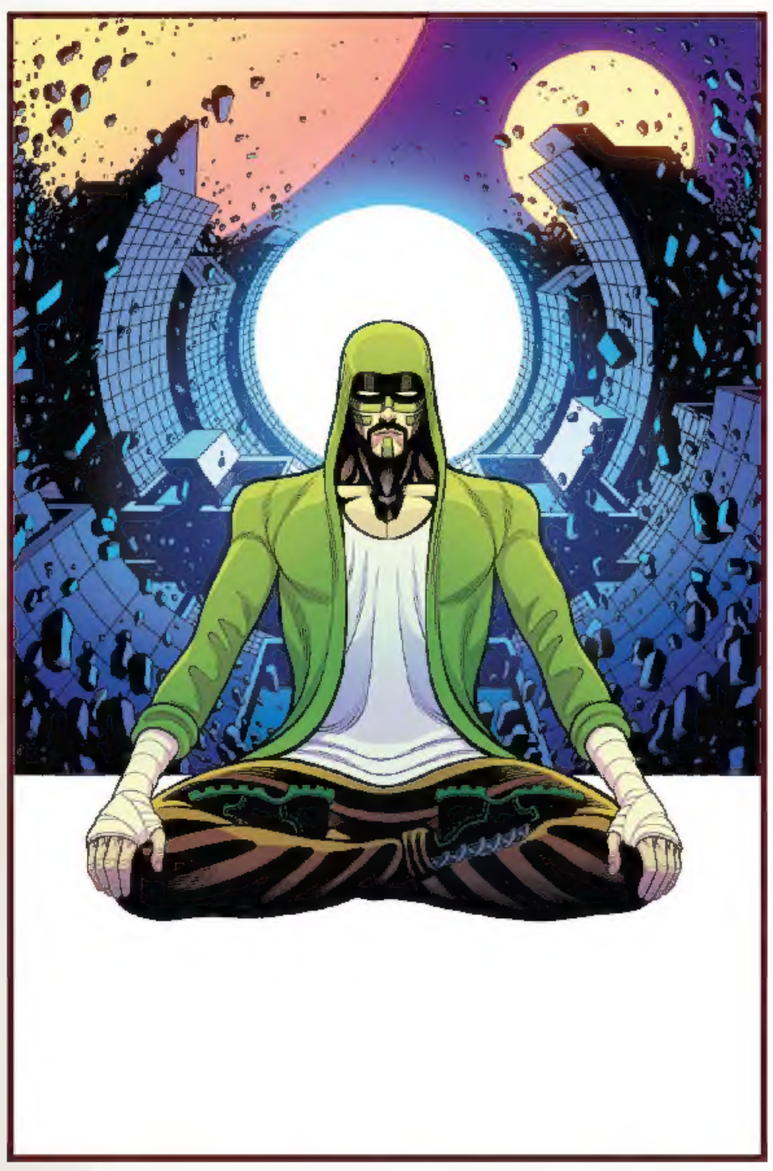
Avengers #10

The Hydra Avengers are a deadly force--but why are they working together?

U.S.Avengers #9

Squirrel Girl and Co. take the fight to Hydra in Paris. Vive la Révolucion!

Secret Warriors #5



Quake's team fights for their future--and the fate of all Inhumans!

Amazing Spider-Man #31

It's Parker Industries vs. the Superior Octopus, and only one can walk away...

SECRET EMPIRE

NEXT

THE CHANCES OF VICTORY HAVE NEVER BEEN LOWER. THE STAKES HAVE NEVER BEEN HIGHER.
IT ALL ENDS HERE.

ZONE